

**Washington, D.C.** - Congressman David Price (NC-04) today introduced legislation that would bring about transparency, accountability, and battlefield coordination for private security contractors operating in a war zone.

Tens of thousands of armed private security contractors (PSCs) are working in Iraq and other conflict zones around the world. Both contractors and critics have complained that these PSCs are operating in a legal and logistical gray area, with scant coordination between contractors and the military personnel with whom they share the battle space and with no clear accountability for abuses.

"The lack of a legal framework for battlefield contracting has allowed certain rogue contractor employees to perpetrate heinous criminal acts without the threat of prosecution, and has left thousands of contractors working legitimately in support of U.S. missions exposed and at risk," Price said.

Numerous accounts of criminal misconduct by private contractors have been documented by the media, including the involvement of contractors in detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib prison and several incidents in which PSCs have fired upon Iraqi civilians without provocation. Despite these allegations not a single case of contractor misconduct has been prosecuted in U.S. courts.

Members of the military have also expressed concern over the lack of coordination and cooperation between American troops and armed contractors. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has repeatedly raised red flags about this lack of communication, recently reporting that "private security contractors continue to enter the battle space without coordinating with the U.S. military, putting both the military and security providers at a greater risk."

Price's legislation, the Transparency and Accountability in Security Contracting Act, will ensure that there is a clear legal framework under which abuses and misconduct can and will be prosecuted under U.S. civilian law. The bill would enhance transparency over the operations of private security contractors in contingency operations, ensuring that the federal government and Congress have the information they need to conduct oversight of contractor operations. It will also improve coordination on the ground between military units and armed contractors sharing

the battlefield.

"This bill will ensure that our troops are protected while also making sure contractors know the rules of the game," Price said. "Legal uncertainty and operational confusion help no one on the battlefield – not the contractors, and certainly not our troops. This comprehensive approach should guarantee that those representing the U.S. government abroad are held to a standard of conduct that is consistent with our mission and the image we want to project in conflict areas."

Specifically, Price's legislation would expand the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act to include all contractors involved in a military operation, establish a Theater Security Contract Coordinating Officer to coordinate communications and operations between contractors and the military, and establish a Theater Investigative Unit of the FBI to investigate and prosecute criminal misconduct. It would also create a mechanism for gathering critical information about the nature, extent, and cost of contracting operations in a particular theater.

Original cosponsors of the Price bill include Triangle area Reps. Brad Miller and Bob Etheridge, as well as House Budget Committee Chairman and Armed Services Committee Member John Spratt, Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Henry Waxman, Chief Deputy Majority Whip Jan Schakowsky, Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers, and Rep. Christopher Shays, a senior Republican Member of the Oversight & Government Reform Committee.

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